

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5494

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, MT, UK

SUBJ: MINTOFF ON GOM-HMG RELATIONS AND TROOP CUTS

REF: VALLETTA 0783

1. SUMMARY: SPEAKING AT JOINT MLP-GWU MASS RALLY APRIL 28 MINTOFF REITERATED HIS GLASGOW STATEMENT THAT UK TROOPS CUTS IN MALTA HAD NOT BEEN DISCUSSED DURING HIS MEETINGS WITH WILSON AND CALLAGHAN. HE SAID THAT GOM-HMG RELATIONS ARE BETTER THAN EVER BEFORE AND THAT THE WILSON GOVERNMENT DID NOT WANT TO BREAK THE BASE AGREEMENT, AND THAT "THEY WERE HAPPY BECAUSE WE REACHED AGREEMENT ON OTHER MATTERS." THESE AGREEMENTS, HE SAID, WOULD BE ANNOUNCED ON MAY DAY.

2. MINTOFF SAID THAT HE WAS SURPRISED TO HEAR REPORTS ABOUT DEFENSE CUTS IN MALTA. HE HAD NOT GONE TO LONDON TO DISCUSS THIS, AND HE HAD LEARNED THAT THESE REPORTS WERE FALSE. HIS TALK WITH WILSON HAD LASTED FOR THREE HOURS, BUT DISCUSSIONS ABOUT MALTA HAD ONLY TAKEN HALF AN HOUR.

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THE REST OF THEIR MEETING WAS DEVOTED TO OTHER MATTERS

SUCH AS MIDDLE EAST AND EUOPE.

3. HE SAID THAT A BRITISH BROADCASTER HAD SAID THAT IF UK WITHDRAWS FROM MALTA, HE, MINTOFF, HAS OTHER ALTERNATIVES, THE SOVIET UNION, CHINA, OR LIBYA. HE WAS WRONG, MINTOFF SAID, BECAUSE GOM HAS MORE THAN THREE ALTERNATIVES. HE DID NOT STATE WHAT THESE MIGHT BE.

4. GOOD GOM-HMG RELATIONS "DOES NOT MEAN THAT BRITAIN IS GOING TO FILL OUR POCKETS WITH MONTYE. IT MEANS THAT THEY RESPECT US." BEFORE THE NEXT ELECTIONS, HE SAID, "I WILL TELL THE PEOPLE WHAT WILSON AND HEATH SAID ABOUT ME, WE WILL THEN BRING OUT ALL THE AMMUNITION."

5. DURING BRIEF CONVERSATION WE HAD SAME DAY WITH PUBLIC WORKS MINISTER LARRY SANT (WHO ACCOMPANIED MINTOFF), HE SPOKE ENTHUSIASTICALLY ABOUT MALTA'S CURRENT GOOD RELATIONS WITH UK, CONFIRMED THAT TROOP CUTS IN MALTA HAD NOT BEEN DISCUSSED, AND COMPLAINED ABOUT SPECULATION TO THAT EFFECT BY BRITISH NEW MEDIA. SANT SAID THAT THE MALTESE DELEGATION HAD OBSERVED CONSTRUCTION OF OIL RIGS IN GLASGOW, AND THAT HE THOUGHT THAT MALTA DRYDOCKS IS CAPABLE TO BUILD SIMILAR STRUCTURES.

6. COMMENT: WE FIND IT DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT POSSIBILITY OF UK OVERSEAS TROOP CUTS WAS NOT DISCUSSED DURING MINTOFF'S VISIT TO UK IN VIEW OF IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL EXPENDITURES OF BRITISH FORCES (ESTIMATED AT FIFTEEN MILLION POUNDS ANNUALLY) TO THE MALTESE ECONOMY, AND MINTOFF'S INSISTANCE DURING AGREEMENT NEGOTIATIONS THAT TROOP LEVELS ON MALTA WOULD REMAIN UNCANCELLED THROUGHOUT THE PERIOD OF THE AGREEMENT. RE OIL RIGS, IT WILL BE RECALLED THAT MINTOFF EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN MARATHON OIL COMPANY CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES ON THE CLYDE IN OCTOBER 1972 (VALLETTA 1842) AND THE POSSIBILITY OF A JOINT VENTURE WITH MALTA DRYDOCKS.GETZ

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